



Senate Committee on Redistricting  
May 25, 2011

The ACLU of Michigan has a long-held belief that the opportunity to cast a meaningful and effective vote should extend to all citizens in Michigan, and we believe the Michigan Legislature should strive to preserve the voters' right to fairly elected representation. Our position is that the denial or dilution of political representation violates the constitutional principles of political fairness and equal protection.

Michigan's citizens expect electoral mechanisms will enable groups of voters to have a realistic prospect of electing candidates of their choice in rough proportion to the group's size and prominence in the electorate. Electoral mechanisms that compromise the ability of groups to share in the exercise of political power violate the spirit of the U.S. Constitution.

Given these constitutional concerns, the ACLU-MI whole heartedly supports efforts to protect fair representation for ethnic and racial minorities through the creation of majority minority districts. Since single member districting is sometimes unable to provide sufficiently diverse representation in elected bodies, we believe that alternative voting systems and other preferential voting mechanisms may enhance such diverse representation. Statutory barriers to the adoption of such alternative systems should be removed, and the use of these systems should be adopted where appropriate.

As an organization dedicated to protecting the civil liberties of all Americans, the ACLU of Michigan supports legislative efforts to protect the rights of minority voters during the redistricting process. During the debates over redistricting lines and maps we urge that support legislation for congressional and state legislative redistricting require the following:

1. Redistricting plans to be available on the Legislature's web site for 30 days before passage.
2. That each chamber holds at least two committee meetings to receive testimony about the plan.
3. That the Legislature holds at least four public hearings around the state to allow direct comment by the public.
4. That the Legislature provides a statement for each district explaining how the boundaries were drawn and how the district has been changed.

These important changes to state law would appropriately increase the role of all constituents in determining how their community will be defined. With so much at stake, it is critical that Michigan residents have a voice in this important part of our democracy.

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